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New publication helps farmers use data for tractor selection

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Road safety: a shared responsibility, continued from page 3

Proper lighting and marking for farm vehicles is only half of the solution. Motor vehicle drivers also must be attentive, watch for farm traffic and heed the signs especially in the weeks ahead.

Motor vehicle operators need to be patient, show understanding and not drive distracted – rushing and not paying attention to the road causes opportunities for collisions. It is important to understand the issue about coming upon a SMV when traveling at a high rate of speed.

Defensive driving tips for rural roads

Defensive-driving tips for rural roads this fall:

- As soon as you see a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem, brake as if you were approaching a stop sign.
- Look for hand or turn signals from the farm vehicle operator, indicating a left turn.
- When passing, make sure you can see the farm vehicle in your rearview mirror before you get back in your lane.

While farm tractors and other farm equipment comprise a small percent of total motor vehicles nationally, the percentage of fatal motor vehicle collisions involving farm equipment is almost five times higher than other vehicle collisions. In crashes involving farm vehicles, the farm vehicle operator was killed nearly twice as often as an occupant of the other motor vehicle.

The most likely types of collisions are left-turn and rear-end collisions. The left-turn collision happens when the farm vehicle is about to make a wide left turn and the vehicle behind begins to pass. The second most common incident is the rear-end collision, where another vehicle approaches farm equipment and is unable to slow down to avoid a collision. This happens because of large difference in travel speeds of these two types of vehicles.

Vehicle drivers must stay alert, especially in areas where rural roadways are experiencing heavier than normal traffic due to flooding and construction detours. Higher speeds used on rural roads, changeable conditions and a variety of traffic all contribute to injuries. Motorists must stay attentive and watch for farm traffic, which can be difficult to spot, recognizing it travels at much slower speeds than normal traffic.

Remember that agricultural equipment operators in these areas will be limited in their ability to use the shoulder as they move down the road, since shoulder conditions could have changed considerably this summer because of flooding (washed away, weak or steeper than before).

New publication helps farmers use data for tractor selection

by Dana Petersen, Farm Energy Conservation and Efficiency Initiative, 515- 294-5233, petersen@iastate.edu; Mark Hanna, extension engineer, 515-294-0468, hmhanna@iastate.edu

Eyeing a new tractor? Your fleet of farm equipment represents a significant capital investment, second only to land in many farm businesses. Likewise, tractor operations represent a significant portion of annual on-farm fuel costs. A new publication from Iowa State University Extension discusses tractor test data to consider when leasing or purchasing a tractor.

"Fuel Efficiency Factors for Tractor Selection" (PM 2089O) is available to download from the ISU Farm Energy Initiative at http://farmenergy.exnet.iastate.edu.

"During the decision making process, tractor test data can be used to evaluate drawbar power and to estimate fuel consumption," said Mark Hanna, ISU Extension agricultural engineer. "For example,

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before purchasing a larger or heavier tractor, consider that at least seven percent of tractor power is commonly required just to overcome rolling resistance created by the tractor's weight."

This publication illustrates the most relevant data that is available to estimate tractor fuel efficiency before purchasing a new tractor. Test measurements include drawbar load tests, lift capacity, hydraulic power and power and fuel use during power-take-off (PTO) operations. Tractor test data for tractors manufactured in the U.S. is available from the Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory (NTTL) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"If you're considering adding new equipment to your fleet before harvest begins, the tractor test data can help you compare newer and older models effectively," said Dana Petersen, ISU Extension program coordinator with ISU Farm Energy. "Seeking the best tractor to suit your operation can reduce costs by conserving fuel."

The Farm Energy publications are part of a series of farm energy conservation and efficiency educational materials being developed through the ISU Farm Energy Initiative. These publications address a variety of energy efficiency topics for farmers and raise awareness of on-farm energy conservation.

For more tips on energy efficiency around the farmstead, visit the website or follow @ISU_Farm_Energy on Twitter.

Harvest crop insurance reminder checklist

By Steven D. Johnson, farm and ag business management specialist, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 515-957-5790, sdjohns@iastate.edu

The 2011 growing season saw extreme weather conditions that will likely result in yield variability even within a field. Harvest projected prices are determined in the month of October by using the average futures price for December corn and November soybean. These final projected prices will be watched closely as they have the potential for increasing final indemnity payments.

It is estimated that 90 percent of Iowa's row crops are covered by crop insurance in 2011. Most producers use farm level policies such as Revenue Protection (RP) or Yield Protection (YP). Special attention to detail prior to and during harvest is recommended.

Always practice good communication skills with your crop insurance agent.

Consider these reminders to maximize your potential indemnity payment:

1. Any old crop grain still stored on-farm should be measured by an adjuster prior to harvest.
2. Notify your agent before destroying or chopping corn for silage.
3. Contact your agent within 72 hours after discovering damage to a crop.
4. Keep production records so that yields for each unit can be separated.
5. Mark production records including yield monitor data and scale tickets by unit, farm name or specific reference.
6. Keep track of feed records for production that is being fed.
7. Report your actual production history (APH) for each unit to your agent immediately following harvest.

Should you have questions, notify your crop insurance agent.

Source: USDA Risk Management Agency and private industry sources, August 2011.